

violence, specifically lynchings, the black students were offended and threatened by the physical and emotional message sent by the nooses hanging in the tree. It seems unconscionable that this kind of Jim Crow era segregation, exclusion and emotional terrorism could be tolerated today.

There was tension on the campus and several fights took place. In one fight, a black student was beaten and the white student responsible was suspended. In another fight, a white student was beaten and the black students allegedly responsible were arrested and charged first with attempted murder and later charged with aggravated battery. These are serious criminal charges.

Let me be clear. I do not condone physical violence. I believe all of the students involved in the alleged fighting incidents should be held accountable by school officials. But school-age children all over this country get in fights every day and are appropriately disciplined by school administrators, whether it is a suspension or some other administrative punishment. Appropriate action is taken, and rarely do these incidents rise to the level of a criminal act. However, regardless of the charges and the unusually harsh approach that was taken by the district attorney, one young man, Mychal Bell, who is now still in jail, should never have been tried as an adult for this incident. That is why the Third Circuit Court of Appeals just ruled that that conviction must be tossed out and the other students should never have been incarcerated for the better part of a year awaiting their fate. This injustice cannot be swept under the rug and pacified simply by moving the case from the adult court.

The work here is not done. Along with Mychal Bell, there are five other students, Robert Bailey, Carwin Jones, Theodore Shaw, Jesse Beard and Bryant Ray Purvis, whose lives have been placed on hold awaiting their day in court.

I call on the district attorney to drop all charges against the Jena Six. The City of Jena must begin a reconciliation process which begins with the apology by and investigation of District Attorney Reed Walters for breach of ethics, false imprisonment and civil rights violations. His comments and actions have been both rogue and irresponsible and clearly demonstrate an agenda that is not in line with peace, justice or fairness.

Young people are traveling to Jena on Thursday led by Howard University students. They are coming from all over America to go to Jena, Louisiana to show support. These cases stand as the greatest civil rights challenges this Nation has faced in the 21st century. I will be traveling with them. I will be in Jena with the students. This is a new chapter in the civil rights movement led by young people to get America to do the right thing and to bring justice to Jena.

A TRIBUTE TO VICKI ANN SUMMERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to Vicki Ann Summers, 59, of Pinehurst, North Carolina, who died on Monday, July 23, 2007, at her home. She was born February 19, 1948, in Stanly County to the late Rudy Lamar Summers and Margaret Ewing Lisk Summers. Vicki was a talented newspaper reporter with a long history in journalism who was most recently employed by The News-Journal in Hoke County. Throughout her career, she spent most of her time covering local government, but she also wrote human interest stories, covered the crime beat and was a photographer. She was recognized for her writings by the North Carolina Press Association.

Vicki grew up in Fayetteville and attended Pine Forest High School before graduating from the North Carolina School of the Arts, which she attended on a full scholarship. She later attended Miami-Dade Junior College in Florida and East Carolina University.

In early 1970, she was a director of public relations for Sheraton Hotels Corporation and the Fountain Bleu Resort in Miami Beach. Around the same time, she worked as a celebrity correspondent for the National Enquirer, as a lifestyle writer for the Miami News, and as a trends writer and garden editor for the Sun Sentinel in Fort Lauderdale. Before coming to the News-Journal, she worked for the Harnett County News in Lillington and the Erwin Times in Erwin, North Carolina.

Vicki was very diligent and really cared about her local community. She took great pride in reporting about the economic development of the county and downtown Raeford streets' redevelopment.

A memorial service was held on Monday, July 30, at 7 p.m. at Northwood Temple in Fayetteville. She is survived by her mother, Margaret Ewing Pope, of Fayetteville, three sisters, Carla S. Merritt and Jan Hernandez, both of Fayetteville, and Lydia Aldridge of Raleigh, and one brother, Eric Summers of Linden.

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BLACKWATER'S OPERATING LICENSE IS REVOKED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Iraq today took the extraordinary step of revoking the operating license of Blackwater U.S.A. in light of accusations that Blackwater employees killed eight Iraqi civilians. Blackwater is a North Carolina-based firm providing private security forces inside Iraq.

This incident has caused another international uproar about the role of the United States in Iraq. Here at home, it is bringing long overdue attention to the role of the so-called contractors. Some call them mercenaries, as many of them are paid more than five times what our regular forces are paid.

The role of private contractors is an issue about which I have been ringing the alarm bell in this House and in the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee for a long time.

Now the Government of Iraq has been compelled to pull the plug on Blackwater U.S.A. The company claims its employees were acting in self-defense. Many people in Iraq claim the company committed atrocities. Who knows the truth? Who has the authority to investigate? Where is the accountability when it comes to private contractors? How many such hired guns are operating in Iraq? Some say 25,000. Some say more. How many contractors totally are operating in Iraq? Some have estimated the number at 180,000, which is more than the U.S. military we have based in Iraq.

Here in Washington, Congress and the President are debating the proper troop levels for U.S. forces. But, meanwhile, there seem to be more and more contractors operating in Iraq. Due to the unpopularity of this war, I have little doubt that the Bush-Cheney plan is to replace our military forces with paid mercenaries. This would be the first time in U.S. history that our Nation will act as an occupying force by contracted mercenaries.

Indeed, the contracting out process of the U.S. military started in a small way back in the 1980s when Vice President CHENEY was Secretary of Defense. It expanded greatly under the first President Bush, and now it has exploded in this administration.

America, pay attention. Make no mistake: private contractors are also very much the face of the West in the Middle East. They might be accountable only to their bosses and shareholders, but they are Americans in the eyes of Iraqis. Blackwater's eviction from Iraq comes as no surprise to those of us who have followed the now well-established, usually irresponsible use of defense contractors as mercenary forces. In fact, I believe that you cannot win in an engagement through the use of mercenary forces.

Blackwater is not the only defense contracting firm operating irresponsibly in lieu of our well-trained and well-respected military. Unlike our government, the Iraqi Government seems to recognize this.

Today, The New York Times reported that the Iraqi Government said it would review the status of all foreign and local security companies working in Iraq. According to the Private Security Company Association of Iraq, the Iraqi Government has suspended the licenses of two other security companies, but they were reinstated after a review.